On the Road to Success

The Report of the Follow-Up of 1995 and 1996 High School Graduates

GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND
AND LABRADOR
Department of Education
Division of Corporate Planning and Research

since October 1998

This publication was produced by the Corporate and Business Planning Division.

Research and Analysis David Ryan
Tiffany Hand
Charlotte Strong
Gerald Galway

Document Design and Graphics Ros O'Leary

Web Site Design and Graphics Craig Blackmore

Project Manager Gerald Galway

Divisional Director Harold Press

Many other people within and outside the Department of Education made a contribution to the development of this document. Their efforts are acknowledged and appreciated. Special thanks are extended to Dale Noel Publications for the cover design.

This report is also available through the Internet at: *http://www.gov.nf.ca/edu* under *"Publications On-Line"*

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Department of Education, 1998
ISBN 1-55146-080-7

The Department of Education gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Human Resources Development Canada in the completion of this project.

105-07130/

Message from the Minister

It gives me great pleasure to provide you with ***On the Road to Success: The Report of the Follow-Up of 1995 and 1996 High School Graduates***. This report is designed to provide information on the post-graduation activities of high school students.

This publication is an example of Government's commitment to carefully monitor the educational progress of the young people of the Province. The findings of this study will provide educators and decision-makers with invaluable information on the trends in postsecondary enrolment for high school graduates and reasons why some graduates choose not to pursue higher education.

I hope that you find this report useful. We intend to continue to research this area to learn more about the many factors which influence attainment so that we may all be better able to promote the highest level of educational success in this province.

Roger D. Grimes, M.H.A.
Minister of Education

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

PART I - FOLLOW-UP OF 1996 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES (with comparisons to 1995 Graduates)

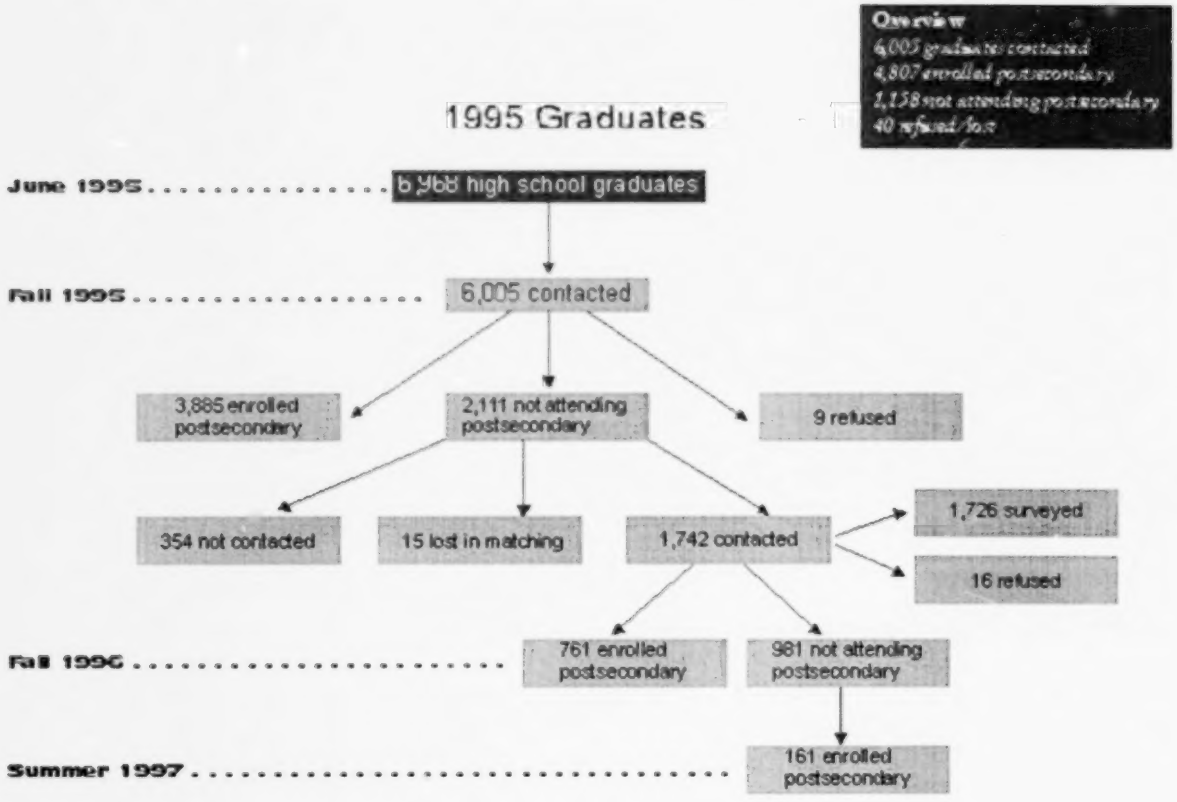
PART 2 - FOLLOW-UP OF 1995 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WHO DID NOT ATTEND A POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION IN FALL 1995

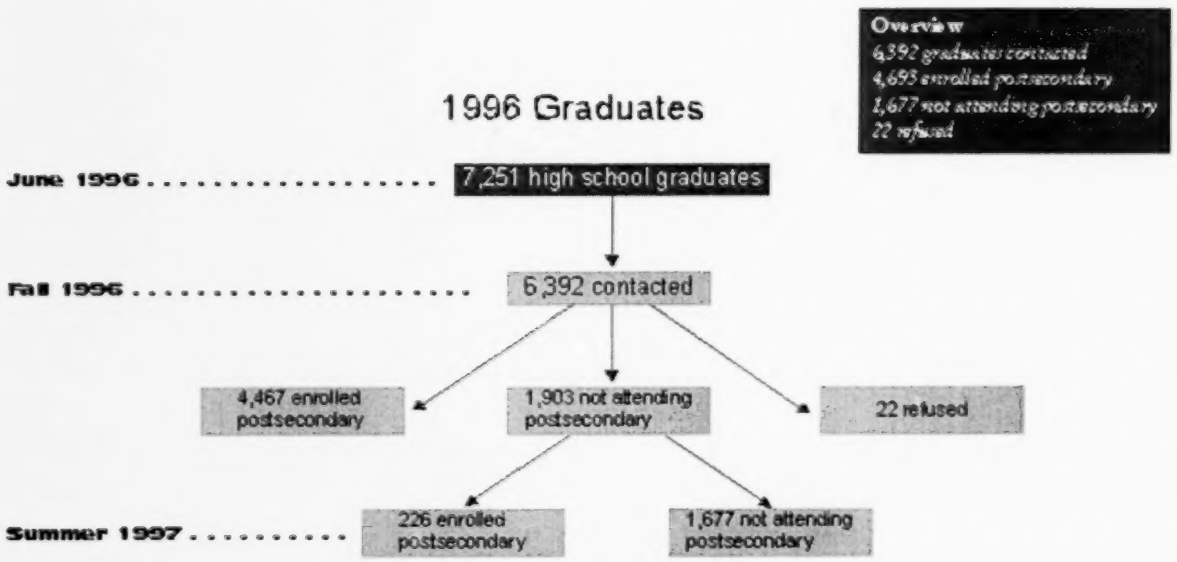
DISCUSSION

FIGURES AND TABLES

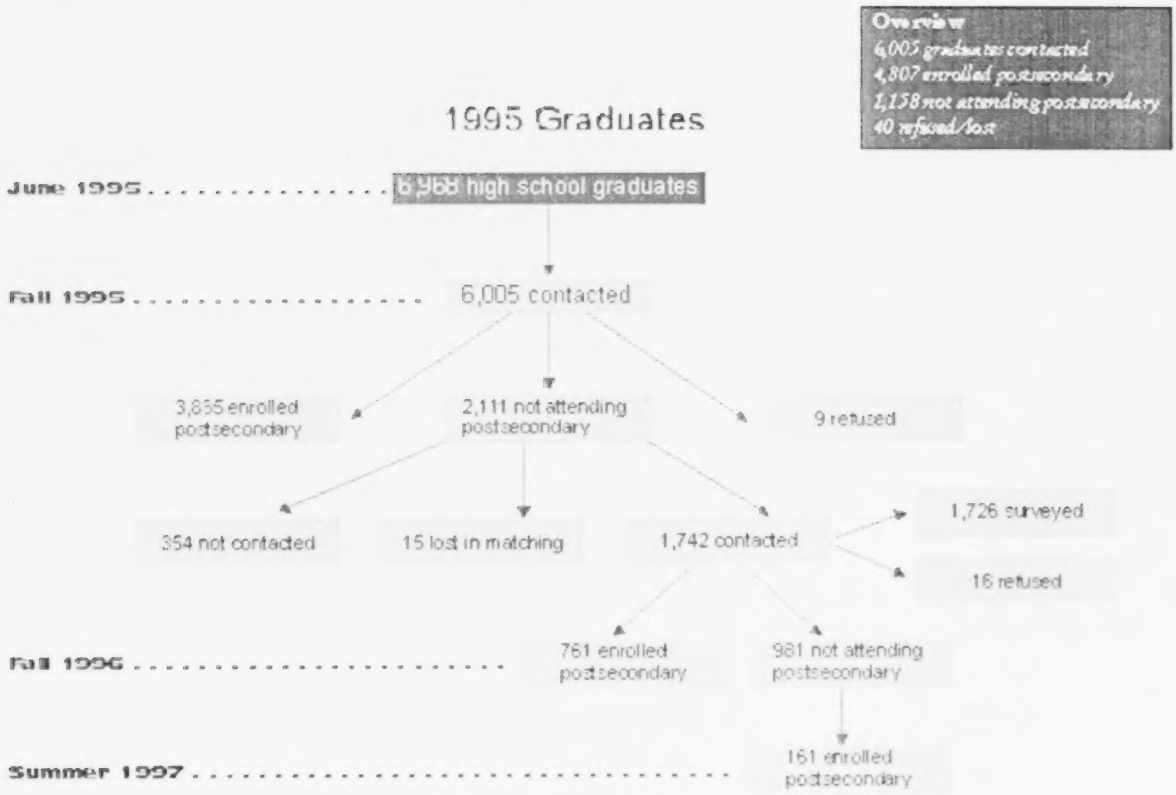
REFERENCES

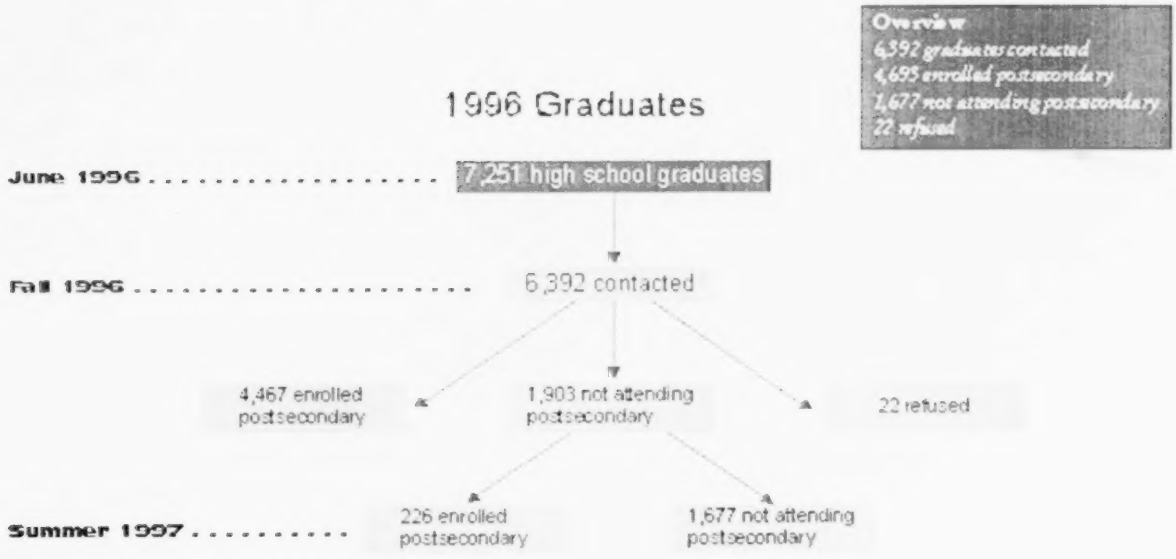
Overview of the Project





Overview of the Project





Executive Summary

In 1996 and 1997 surveys were conducted to determine the post-graduation activities of high school graduates from 1995 and 1996. Graduates from 1995 who did not attend a postsecondary institution during the fall after graduation were also surveyed a year later to determine their postsecondary status. For both cohorts, reasons why students postpone or forgo a postsecondary education were explored.

Data were collected through telephone interviews and information available from Department of Education databases. High school databases were linked to postsecondary enrolment databases to determine the number of students attending various postsecondary institutions in the Province. The remaining high school graduates were surveyed by telephone to determine their activities since graduation, specifically their current educational pursuits and/or plans for future study.

Findings

Follow-Up of 1996 High School Graduates

As of Fall 1996, 73.9% of 1996 graduates tracked were furthering their education at some level, with 69.9% attending a postsecondary institution. This is an increase from 70.6% of 1995 graduates who furthered their education, with 64.7% enrolled in a postsecondary program.

During the first eight months of 1997, a further 3.5% of 1996 graduates had enrolled in a postsecondary institution, bringing the total postsecondary enrolment, as of August 1997, to 73.4%.

Memorial University accounted for 52.5% of the 1996 graduates attending a postsecondary institution in Fall 1996, down from 60.2% for the 1995 high school cohort contacted after a similar time period had elapsed. However, the actual number of students who enrolled at Memorial University increased.

The proportion of 1996 graduates who enrolled in private colleges increased to 18.2% from 14.0% in 1995. The public collegÆs share also increased to 16.7% of 1996 graduates, as compared to 15.5% in 1995.

In 1996, 7.3% of high school graduates attended an out-of-province university directly from high school, up from 5.9% in 1995.

Of the 1996 graduates not attending a postsecondary institution as of August 1997, 73.9% indicated they do plan to attend in the future, with the vast majority planning to attend by the end of 1998. The institution of choice for the largest group of these students was the College of the North Atlantic (38.7%).

Reasons most often cited for not attending a postsecondary institution in the fall after graduation were *career undecided* (19.6%) and *financial* (18.7%).

Graduates having no plans to attend a postsecondary institution reported *job prospects/ working* (31.4%), *financial* (24.7%) and *not interested* (20.4%) as reasons for not attending.

The vast majority of those planning to attend in the future reported that they plan to fund their education using a student loan (60.3%). Over one-quarter (26.1%) indicated they expected job income to be their funding source.

One-third of the graduates who stated they were not planning to pursue a postsecondary education in the future reported that they would attend if financing were available.

Follow-Up of 1995 High School Graduates Who Did Not Attend a Postsecondary Institution in Fall 1995

For 1995 graduates not attending a postsecondary institution in the first contact, 52.9% have since enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Of the respondents who indicated in the original follow-up that they would attend a postsecondary institution in the future, 59.2 actually did enrol.

Most of those who delayed enrolling in a postsecondary program eventually enrolled in the college system: 34.7% enrolled in the public college and 32.5% in a private institution. Only about 23% attended Memorial University.

As of August 1997, postsecondary participation for all of the 1995 high school graduates that have been tracked was nearly 80%.

Late enrollees comprised 15.4% of 1995 graduates contacted.

The primary reasons for those not attending as previously planned included *financial* (34.0%), *working/job prospects* (25.0%) and *career undecided* (14.5%).

Of the 804 respondents re-contacted who have not yet attended a postsecondary institution, 70.6% plan to do so in the future.

For those with no plans to attend in the future (236), cost was the main barrier to their participation: 51.3% indicated that the cost of attending affected their decision not to attend, and 33.9% reported that they would attend if financing were made available.

Introduction

The importance of pursuing further education beyond high school is well documented. Studies by the Department of Education and other agencies have demonstrated that successful employment is closely related to educational attainment. The higher the level of education the greater the likelihood of employment and the likelihood that employment will be in a training-related area. Given the strong body of evidence which demonstrates the value of postsecondary education, there was an identified need to more fully understand the reasons why a substantial number of students opt not to continue their education after they graduate from high school.

The high school graduate follow-up study addresses the need for a clear picture of what high school graduates do upon leaving school. Prior to 1995, the last group of high school graduates to be studied was the 1989 Grade 12 (Level III) cohort (see Sharpe & Spain, 1991) in conjunction with the Youth Transition into the Labour Market Study. The emphasis on postsecondary and adult education has been considerable since the previous study was conducted, and there have been significant changes in the contextual factors which influence postsecondary participation. This project aims to obtain valid and reliable information on what high school graduates were doing in the fall after graduation, to assess why graduates do or do not pursue a postsecondary education, to discover what postsecondary institutions they are attending, and to query their educational plans. This document reports on follow-up studies from two cohorts of high school graduates, 1995 and 1996.

A follow-up study of 1996 graduates was conducted in Summer 1997. Those who had not attended a postsecondary institution since graduation were asked about their plans to further their education. High school graduates with no plans to attend a postsecondary institute were queried on reasons why, and the level to which financing played a role in their decision. The results of this study are presented in Part 1 of this report.

In Fall 1995, the first follow-up of 1995 graduates was conducted. Those 1995 graduates who did not attend a postsecondary institution in Fall 1995 were also contacted in Summer 1997.

Of those 1995 graduates not attending a postsecondary institution (2,111 of 6,005 graduates accounted for), 85% indicated they were planning to attend in the near future. Because so many graduates from this group indicated plans to eventually further their education, this group of 2,111 graduates from the 1995 cohort was studied. Of primary interest was discovering how these postsecondary ambitions translated into attendance in postsecondary institutions. For this second follow-up of the 1995 graduates, respondents were asked a number of questions regarding their activities since the previous contact. Those who had enrolled in a postsecondary program were queried on a number of issues related to their attendance. These included institution, program, enrolment dates, funding, educational expectations, whether they attended the institution and program of first choice, and plans for the future. Those who had not enrolled were questioned on future plans, why they had not attended a postsecondary institution as planned, and how the financial aspect of postsecondary education factored into their decision. A number of demographic related questions were also asked. The results of this study are presented in Part 2 of this report.

An overall theme for both parts of the current study was to better understand why students postpone or forgo a postsecondary education. The findings of this study provide those responsible for educational policy and practice with current information on trends in postsecondary enrolment for high school graduates directly from high school and after an initial period of postponement.

Part 1

1.1 Research Questions

1.2 Methodology

1.3 Results

1.3.1 Enrolment Status

1.3.1.1 Fall 1996 Status of 1996 High School Graduates

1.3.1.2 Summer 1997 Status of 1996 High School Graduates

1.3.2 Reasons Given for Not Attending a Postsecondary Institution

1.3.3 Plans of Graduates Not Pursuing a Postsecondary Education

1.3.3.1 Graduates Planning to Attend
Funding Issues
Expected Level of Education

1.3.3.2 Graduates Not Planning to Attend
Group Demographics
Funding Issues

1.1 Research Questions

The following questions formed the basis of the 1997 follow-up of 1996 graduates:

- What is the fall status of the 1996 high school graduates? How do the results compare to the 1995 graduates?
- What postsecondary institutions are 1996 high school graduates attending?
- What are the reasons why some graduates do not enrol in postsecondary institutions after high school?
- What are the postsecondary plans for those who did not enrol in a postsecondary institution directly from high school?
- What level of education do those attending or planning to attend expect to achieve?
- To what extent is the decision not to attend a postsecondary institution based on financial factors?

1.2 Methodology

The status of the 7,251 June 1996 high school graduates was determined by matching the Department of Education's 1996 high school graduate database, and the Fall 1996 enrolment databases of Memorial University of Newfoundland, the College of the North Atlantic, and private postsecondary institutions. This process identified the 1996 high school graduates who attended one of these institutions. When an identification was made, the graduates were removed from the original high school database for later analysis. The remaining unmatched students were left to be contacted through telephone interviewing.

Of the original 7,251 students who graduated in June 1996, 3,346 were identified as having enrolled in Fall 1996 in a postsecondary institution within the Province. This left 3,905 graduates to be contacted by telephone. Two specific problems reduced the numbers of matches that could be made, and thus increased the number of telephone contacts required. In the public college database, Westviking College enrolment was unavailable. In addition, the Department of Education's private institution database was incomplete at the time of the survey.

For those unmatched, available home telephone information from the high school certification database was used as an initial contact point. However, a significant number of phone numbers were initially unavailable in the Department's database. Of the 3,905 graduates to be contacted by phone, 27% had no phone listing. However, through individual requests made of schools, and the use of search engines available on CD-ROM and the Internet, a large proportion of phone numbers were identified. Nevertheless, the lack of up-to-date information on student home phone numbers inevitably reduced the successful contact rate.

For the 3,905 graduates not identified in the enrolment databases, telephone interviews were conducted during late Summer 1997. Of the graduates to be contacted, 77.4% were reached and successfully surveyed. For the 859 not contacted, Table 1.2.1 displays the breakdown of unsuccessful contact attempts. Twenty-two graduates refused to participate.

Table 1.2.1: Unsuccessful Call Results, 1996 High School Graduates

Most unsuccessful call attempts resulted from graduates who had *moved* (43.7%), followed by *phone numbers not in service* (28.4%). The category *unreachable* (12.9%) refers to repeated call attempts where there was no answer or the respondent was not at home during regular interviewing hours. For *no number available* (5.1%), student records did not contain a home phone number, and search engines could not provide any possible listing.

Overall, for all the June 1996 graduates, 6,392, or 88.2%, were identified. Aggregate results presented in the report are for those tracked only, and caution should be used in applying overall percentages to the entire June graduate population. The majority of the 881 graduates not contacted have likely moved away from their high school address, and would be either working, unemployed, working as a homemaker, or enrolled in an out-of-province postsecondary institution. This group is expected to have no Memorial enrollees, and a very limited number of private or public college entrants.

1.3 Results

1.3.1 Enrolment Status

1.3.1.1 Fall 1996 Status of 1996 High School Graduates

Using information collected from the telephone survey and the database matching of postsecondary enrolment, the status of the 1996 high school graduates was determined. All results presented here are based on the 6,392 graduates who could be tracked. Table 1.3.1 gives the breakdown of graduate pursuits as of Fall 1996 (September to December).

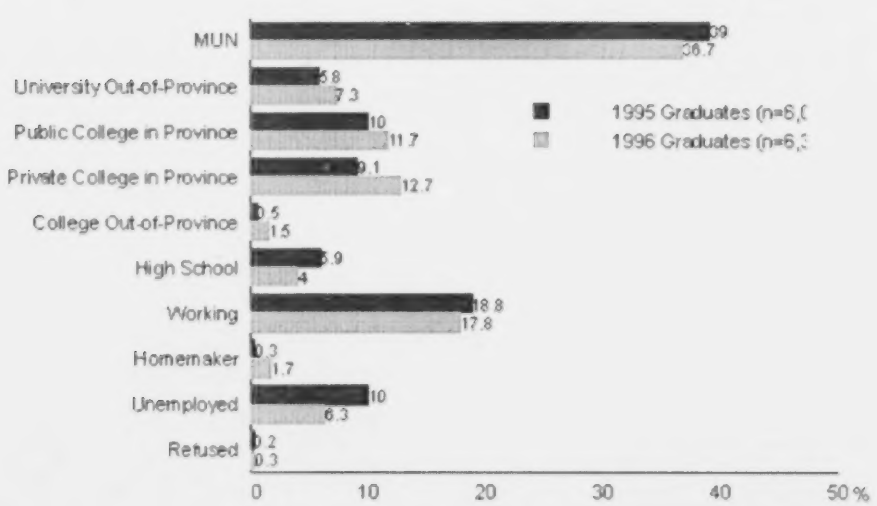
Table 1.3.1: Status of the 1996 High School Graduates, Fall 1996

Nearly three out of every four (73.9%) June 1996 graduates were furthering their education. Almost 70% were pursuing some form of postsecondary education and another 4% had returned to high school to upgrade their marks. Memorial University accounted for the majority of high school graduates with 36.7% enrolled as of Fall 1996.

In total, 25.8% were not enrolled in some form of education program. Well over half of these were *working* (17.8%), with another 6.3% *unemployed and looking for work*. The remaining 1.7% were classified as *homemaker*, which indicates that they were staying at home and had chosen not to work or look for work outside the home. As described earlier, 22 graduates (0.3%) declined to participate in the survey.

Figure 1.3.1 presents a comparison of the results for the first fall following graduation for the 1996 cohort and the results from the 1995 Graduate Follow-up Survey.

Figure 1.3.1: Fall Status of June Graduates, 1995 and 1996



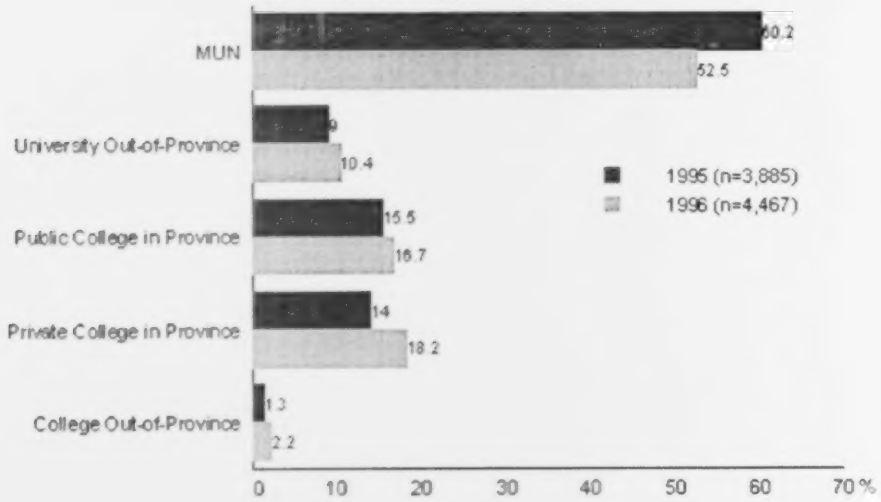
Note: Total fall enrolment 1995: 70.6%, total fall enrolment 1996: 73.9%.

A comparison of postsecondary enrolment of 1996 high school graduates and that of 1995 graduates shows there was an increase from 64.7% for the 1995 cohort to 69.9% for the 1996 cohort. The number of

graduates back in high school is down one-third from the previous year, likely because higher performance levels in high school courses resulted in fewer graduates needing to repeat such courses to improve grades. As might be expected, given an overall increase in postsecondary attendance, those reporting they were working or unemployed were both down. The number classified as homemakers was up slightly.

Figure 1.3.2 presents a comparison of the institutional postsecondary enrolment share for the 1996 graduates (n=4,467) compared to the 1995 graduates (n=3,885) for enrolment directly from high school. It is clear that more 1996 graduates were attending postsecondary institutions. Although the actual number who enrolled at Memorial increased slightly, proportionally, high school graduates are attending Memorial University in much smaller numbers. The private colleges have gained the largest share.

Figure 1.3.2: Postsecondary Enrolment Share of High School Graduates in the Fall After Graduation by Institution, 1995 and 1996



1.3.1.2 Summer 1997 Status of 1996 High School Graduates

Because the 1997 follow-up survey of 1996 graduates was conducted during the late summer, respondents who did not attend a postsecondary institution during Fall 1996 were asked whether they had attended during the first 8 months of 1997 (up to and including August). Of the 1,903 graduates who indicated that they did not attend a postsecondary institution during Fall 1996 (including those upgrading), 226 (11.9%) reported attending a postsecondary institution during 1997. For this group, 89 (39.4%) enrolled in Memorial University, 73 (32.3%) in the provincial private colleges, and 22 (9.7%) in the provincial public college. Those attending a university or college outside the Province accounted for 42 graduates, or 18.6% of the group.

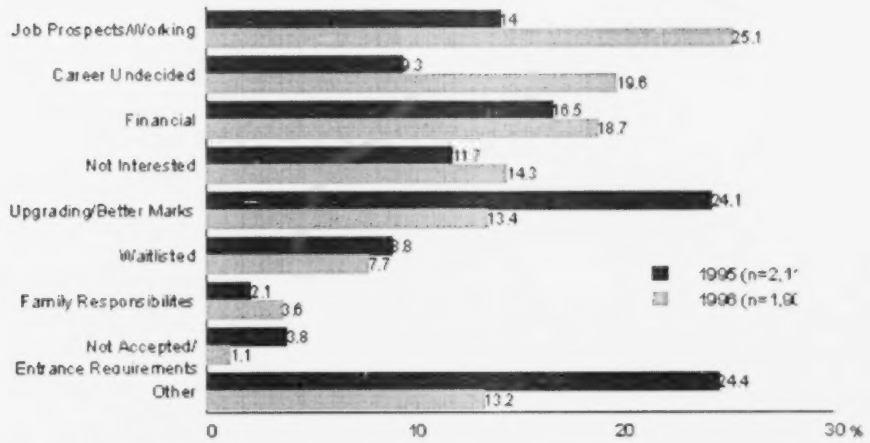
Fourteen months after graduation from high school, 4,693 (73.4%) of the 6,392 June 1996 graduates had enrolled in some form of a postsecondary education program. In other words, after about one year out of school, almost three out of every four graduates had enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

1.3.2 Reasons Given for Not Attending a Postsecondary Institution

Graduates of 1996 who indicated they had not attended a postsecondary institution during Fall 1996 were asked why. Figure 1.3.3 presents the reasons reported and compares them to reasons presented for the 1995 graduates. It should be noted that the survey design allowed respondents to give more than one reason.

For the graduates of 1996, the most frequently cited reasons for not attending a postsecondary institution were *job prospects/ working* followed by *career undecided* and next by *financial reasons*. Compared to 1995 graduates, the 1996 respondents cited *job prospects/ working* and *career undecided* more often. In 1995, *upgrading* was the top reason for not attending a postsecondary institution but the proportion of graduates returning to upgrade their high school marks dropped considerably in 1996.

Figure 1.3.3: Reasons for Not Attending a Postsecondary Institution in the Fall After June Graduation. 1995 and 1996



Note: Percentages do not add to 100 because multiple responses are reported.

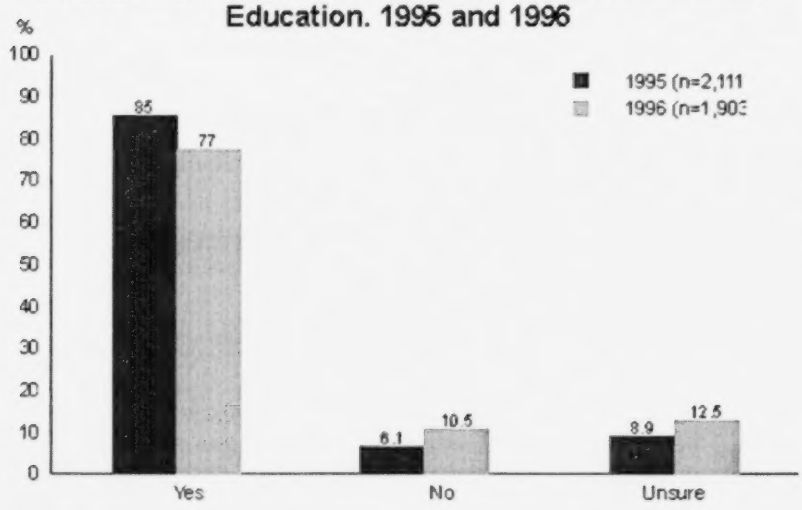
The results of those who delayed attending by one or more semesters and attended during the first 8 months of 1996 (226) do not differ significantly from the overall results. More cited *upgrading* (19.5%), while fewer cited *financial reasons* (14.2%) and *not interested* (10.2%) as reasons for not attending directly from high school. Clearly higher proportions of those upgrading were doing so to be ready to eventually attend a postsecondary institution.

1.3.3 Plans of Graduates Not Pursuing a Postsecondary Education

As of the end of August 1997, 1,677 students had not furthered their education at the postsecondary level. Respondents were asked whether they had any plans to attend a postsecondary institution in the future. Nearly three out of four respondents (73.9%) indicated that they plan to attend, with another 14.2% unsure if they would do so. Results for this question do not vary significantly by gender. However, parent education level appears to be related to postsecondary aspirations. Approximately 84% of graduates who have at least one parent with a postsecondary education indicated they planned to attend in the future, whereas only 70.3% of those whose parents did not have a postsecondary education indicated they had plans to attend.

In order to compare the 1996 results with the results for the 1995 graduates an assumption had to be made. In the 1995 follow-up, the question of future plans was asked to non-postsecondary participants as of the January immediately after June graduation, however, 1996 results were as of a full year later. The assumption is made that the 266 graduates who delayed attending a postsecondary institution until 1997, would have said 'Yes' to the question of future plans if asked in January. With this adjustment, Figure 1.3.4 below presents the comparison.

Figure 1.3.4: Plans of Graduates Who Did Not Enrol Directly from High School to Pursue a Postsecondary Education, 1995 and 1996



Note: Results adjusted to the January following graduation.

At first glance, there appears to be a significant drop in 1996 graduates planning to attend as compared to the 1995 graduates. However, a greater proportion of 1996 graduates attended a postsecondary institution directly out of high school. By combining the total attending during the fall after graduation with those planning to attend as of the following January only a slight difference is apparent. For the 1995 graduating class, 93.8% of graduates were attending or planning to attend a postsecondary institution compared to 92.8% of 1996 graduates.

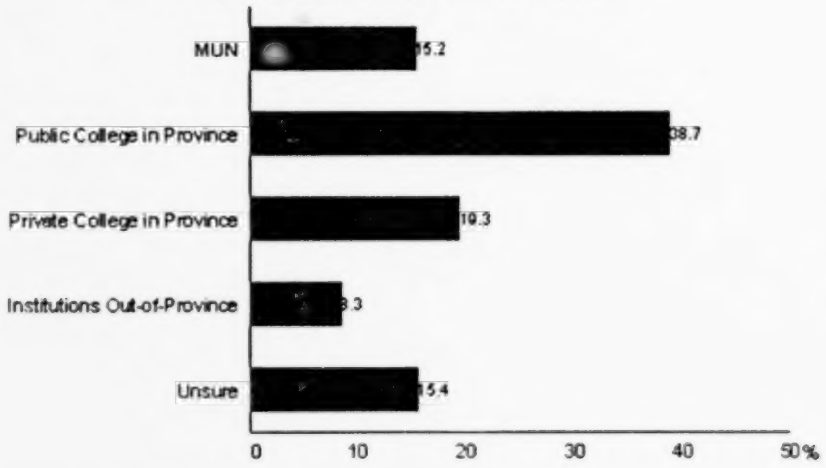
1.3.3.1 Graduates Planning to Attend

Additional questions regarding postsecondary aspirations were asked of the 1,240 graduates who indicated they planned to attend a postsecondary institution in the future. Of particular interest was the institution they planned to attend. Results are presented in Figure 1.3.5.

The vast majority of this group (n=1,240) reported having a planned destination in mind. Only 15.4% were unsure of where they would attend. Most graduates (38.7%) reported they would attend a campus of the provincial public college. Many of these are believed to be graduates who had been waitlisted for programs at the College of the North Atlantic. Of the 128 graduates who indicated waiting lists as a reason, 98 were planning to attend the public college.

Less than 20% of graduates planned to attend a private college, while 15.2% indicated they would attend Memorial University, a result relatively consistent with results from the 1995 follow-up. The small proportion suggests that most graduates who attend university do so directly out of high school. A greater proportion of females than males plan to attend a private institution, 25.3% compared to 13.8%, while more males (45.2%) than females (31.4%) plan to attend the College of the North Atlantic. Overall, 86.1% plan to attend a postsecondary institution on a full-time basis, with 5.5% planning to attend part-time and 8.4% unsure.

Figure 1.3.5: Preferred Institution Type of 1996 Graduates Who Did Not Enrol Directly from High School But Who Plan to Attend



Note: Planning to attend 1,240.

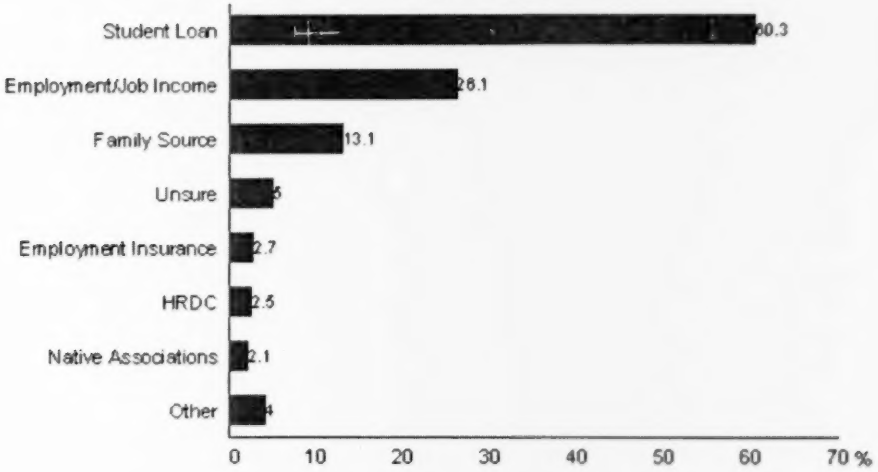
With respect to expected starting date, 48% of the June 1996 graduates reported they planned to begin during Fall 1997, with another 34.9% anticipating enrolling before the end of 1998. Another 2.2% expected to begin in 1999 or later, while 14.6% were unsure of when they would begin. For those with no set starting date in mind, just under half were also unsure of what postsecondary institution they would attend. With no set place or date chosen, graduates in this subgroup (6.6% of 1,240) are less likely to attend a postsecondary institution in the future even though they indicated that this was their intention.

The vast majority of those planning to attend do not anticipate any difficulties or concerns as a result of postponing the start of their education. Only 9.4% reported such concerns, with 53.4% of these individuals mentioning getting back into study/study habits as the particular difficulty they anticipate. Just over one in five (21.2%) report having financial concerns.

Funding Issues

Graduates planning to attend a postsecondary institution were asked how they would expect to fund their education. Figure 1.3.6 shows that most 1996 graduates reported they would obtain a *student loan* to finance their education (60.3%), with *job income* (26.1%) and *family source* (13.1%) cited less often. Reviewing these results by planned destination some minor differences were found. For those planning to attend a private institution, 78.2% expect to have a student loan, as compared to 53.5% for a public college and 50.8% for those planning to attend an out-of-province institution. The responses *employment/job income* (35.7%) and *family source* (23%), were higher than average for an out-of-province institution.

Figure 1.3.6: Expected Source of Funding of 1996 Graduates Who Did Not Enrol Directly from High School But Who Plan to Attend



Note: Total respondents = 1,240.

If a respondent indicated *student loan* or *unsure* on the question of expected funding, they were asked about the anticipated level of funding they would require for each year of the program. As might be expected, nearly 60.0% were unable to provide a response to the question. Table 1.3.2 indicates the responses. The high response in the *unsure* category limits further analysis.

Table 1.3.2: Anticipated Student Loan Amount Required, 1996 Graduates Who Did Not Enrol But Who Plan to Attend

Expected Level of Education

On the question of expected level of education that respondents want to achieve, *public college diploma/certificate* was mentioned most often at 39.5%, followed by a *university degree* (23.2%), and a *private college diploma/certificate* (5.9%). Nearly a quarter of responses (23.1%) were *unsure* for which level they were aiming. An overwhelming 98.8% indicated that they expected to achieve the goal they had set.

1.3.3.2 Graduates Not Planning to Attend

This group is composed of 1996 high school graduates who have not attended a postsecondary institution since they left school, and have indicated that they are unsure or have no plans to attend in the future. While they represent only a small subgroup (6.8%) of the 6,392 high school graduates tracked, they are none the less important, because they provide key information related to why a student may forgo a postsecondary education.

As was the case for other groups who did not enrol directly from high school, this group was asked why they did not pursue a postsecondary education in Fall 1996. The responses to this question were a part of the overall results presented in Figure 1.3.3. However, it is valuable to isolate this group to determine if reasons differed from the whole. Table 1.3.3 presents reasons students provided for not attending in Fall 1996, broken down by the three groups: those attending during 1997, those planning to attend, and those who had no plans to attend. Column counts and percent totals may exceed 100% as multiple responses were reported.

The responses of graduates who delayed attending until 1997 and those planning to attend are fairly similar. However, reasons presented by the group not planning to attend have a remarkably different profile. As expected, very few of the graduates not planning to attend cited *waitlists* or *upgrading* as the reason. For this group, there are three key reasons reported for not attending that account for nearly 77% of responses: *job prospects/working* (31.4%), financial reasons (24.7%), and *not interested* (20.4%). These responses were substantially higher than those of the other two groups.

Table 1.3.3: Reasons Citied by June 1996 High School Graduates for Not Attending a Postsecondary Institution in Fall 1996

Group Demographics

To better understand those having no plans to further their education, it is worthwhile to examine survey demographics for this group in comparison to graduates who are planning to attend in the future.

Parent educational background has been shown to be a prominent factor in predicting whether individuals will pursue postsecondary studies. The data from this study support this finding. More than three-quarters of those who have no plans to enrol in a postsecondary program and 61.3% of those who did not attend directly from high school but plan to attend were children of parents with no postsecondary education.

Another demographic variable showing significant statistical difference is marital status. Those graduates who were married or living common-law were less likely to have plans to attend postsecondary in the future. While only 4.1% of those planning to attend were married or living common law, this figure doubles to 8.1% for those having no future postsecondary plans. With regard to gender, the group with no postsecondary plans has proportionally more males than those planning to attend (56.8% and 52.5% respectively).

Finally, to the question of whether respondents were supporting themselves financially, 63% of those planning to attend indicated yes, while 76.2% of those not planning to attend reported they were supporting themselves financially. There were no statistical differences between the two groups with respect to whether the respondent was living at home, or whether a parent had been receiving employment insurance benefits in the past 12 months.

To summarize, the data show that generally, graduates who chose not to pursue postsecondary education had parents who do not have a postsecondary education, were more likely to be male, married or living common-law, and were supporting themselves financially.

Funding Issues

Graduates of 1996 who did not enrol in a postsecondary program and had no plans to do so were asked if the cost of attending a postsecondary institution affected the decision not to further their education. Just under half (47.6%) of the 437 graduates with no plans to attend in the future indicated that cost did, in fact, affect their decision. This result is consistent with findings from the second follow-up of the 1995 graduates.

Those indicating *yes* and *unsure* to the question of whether cost affected their decision not to attend were asked about the amount of funding they thought would be required through a student loan. The vast majority were unsure (77.8%), leaving just 47 respondents who were able to give a monetary value response. Due to the small size of this subgroup, further analysis would not have been appropriate.

The 212 respondents who cited financial factors as affecting their decision not to attend were asked whether they would pursue a postsecondary education if financial assistance were made available. Just over two-thirds indicated *yes*.

On the other hand, 51% of the 437 graduates with no plans to attend indicated that financing was not an issue in their decision, and presumably would not change their minds if their financial situation were different. For these 223 graduates for whom finances were not a factor in their decision, about half indicated they were either *not interested* or were *undecided* in their choice of career. *Job prospects* was cited as the single largest reason for not attending (33.2%).

Part 2

2.1 Research Questions

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Bias Review

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Enrolment Status

2.3.1.1 Total Postsecondary Enrolment for All 1995 High School Graduates

2.3.1.2 Fall 1996 Enrolment Status of 1995 Graduates Who Did Not Attend Directly from High School

2.3.1.3 Summer 1997 Enrolment Status of 1995 Graduates Who Did Not Attend Directly from High School

2.3.1.4 Postsecondary Enrolment of 1995 Graduates Not Attending Directly from High School by Fall 1995 Status

2.3.1.5 Postsecondary Enrolment of 1995 Graduates Not Attending Directly from High School by Fall 1995 Plans

2.3.2 Choice of Institution

2.3.2.1 1995 Graduates Who Did Not Attend Directly from High School

2.3.2.2 Comparison of Late Enrollees with Direct Enrollees

2.3.2.3 1995 Graduates Attending a Postsecondary Institution at Any Time Since Graduation

2.3.3 Questionnaire Results

2.3.3.1 Full-Time and Part-Time Attendance

2.3.3.2 Barriers/Difficulties in Starting Postsecondary Education

2.3.3.3 Funding for Education

2.3.3.4 First Choice of Program

2.3.3.5 Expected Level of Education

2.3.3.6 Program Status

2.3.3.7 1995 Graduates Who Have Never Attended a Postsecondary Institution

2.3.3.8 1995 Graduates Not Attending a Postsecondary Institution as Originally Planned as of Last Contact

2.3.3.9 1995 Graduates Planning to Attend as of Last Contact

2.3.3.10 Those Not Planning to Attend

2.3.3.11 Financial Barriers

2.1 Research Questions

The following questions formed the basis of the 1997 follow-up of 1995 graduates who did not pursue postsecondary studies directly from high school.

- What is the status of the 1995 graduates who did not attend a postsecondary institution in the fall after graduation?
- What percent have attended a postsecondary institution?
- What postsecondary institutions are they attending?
- Did those attending a postsecondary institution go to the institution of their first choice?
- What were the reasons for not attending their first choice of institution?
- What proportion of the approximately 85% of 1995 graduates who indicated that they were planning to further their education at the postsecondary level in the very near future actually attended?
- Why have some graduates who were planning to attend a postsecondary institution not done so?
- What are the educational plans of those who have yet to enrol in a postsecondary program?
- What level of education do those attending or planning to attend a postsecondary institution expect to achieve?
- To what extent is the decision not to attend a postsecondary institution based on financial factors?

2.2 Methodology

From the original Fall 1995 follow-up of June 1995 graduates, it was determined that 2,111 did not attend a postsecondary institution. These graduates were matched to a database of previous contact information. This resulted in a loss of less than 1% of contacts, leaving 2,096 respondents available to be surveyed. Telephone interviews were conducted during July and August of 1997. Of those available to be contacted, 1,726 were successfully surveyed, with 16 others refusing to participate (0.9%), giving a total of 1,742 (82.5%) former graduates reached.

The remaining 354 were unable to be contacted for a number of reasons. Table 2.2.1 provides a breakdown of unsuccessful call attempts. The majority fell into two categories: phone numbers that were *not in service* (31.1%), and situations where graduates had *moved* with no forwarding number (29.9%). Every effort was made to find new contact numbers for those missed, including the use of CD-ROM phone databases, and web-based search engines.

Table 2.2.1: Unsuccessful Call Results

2.2.1 Bias Review

For those not reached during the interview process, the possibility of potential bias being introduced through lack of inclusion was examined. A limited number of demographic and first survey variables were available to review for statistical differences among the two groups - those contacted and those not. The variables used in this analysis were:

- Plans to attend a postsecondary institution in the future: (yes, no, unsure)
- Status as of Fall 1996 (upgrading, working, unemployed, homemaker)
- Gender, Region, and District

For the majority of the variables tested, no statistical differences were found between the two groups. Plans for further education at the postsecondary level, gender, region, and district all showed no significant differences. One marginal difference was found in the status as of Fall 1996 variable, where there was a higher percent of those who were working in the group that was not contacted than in the contacted group. It is possible that this difference may be attributed to migration out of the Province for employment purposes.

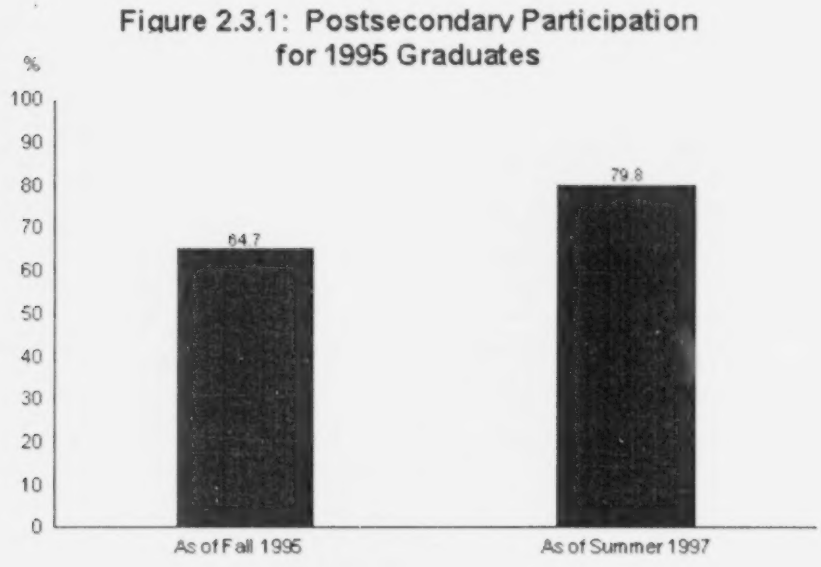
With bias variables tested and displaying positive results, it is assumed that the survey results for the 1,726 graduates contacted are representative of the original population of 2,111.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Enrolment Status

2.3.1.1 Total Postsecondary Enrolment for All 1995 High School Graduates

It is possible to assess the total postsecondary participation for 1995 high school graduates using data collected from both follow-up studies. It is important to note that these numbers reflect enrolment only, and are in no way indicative of program completion. Further, the base consists only of those high school graduates tracked in the original follow-up survey (n=6,005). Figure 2.3.1 shows the percent of graduates who were enrolled as of Fall 1995, and those as of Summer 1997. The number enrolled as of Summer 1997 reflects the inclusion of the graduates who enrolled since the beginning of 1996. It is noteworthy that nearly 80% (n=4,807) of graduates from the class of 1995 (n=6,005) had started a postsecondary education.



Note: Total June graduates = 6,968, total accounted for in study = 6,005.

2.3.1.2 Fall 1996 Enrolment Status of 1995 Graduates Who Did Not Attend Directly From High School

As a point of comparison with results collected in the original follow-up of 1995 high school graduates, respondents were asked their enrolment status as of Fall 1996, one year later. Results are presented in Table 2.3.1, and are based on the 1,742 contacts that were made during this study.

The majority of respondents (55.4%) were not attending a postsecondary institution during this time period. Those who were *working* accounted for 40.9% of graduates, with another 11.8% *unemployed* and *looking for work*. Of particular interest is the fact that 1% of the high school graduates indicated that they were back in high school.

Table 2.3.1: Fall 1996 Status of 1995 High school Graduates Who Did NOt Enrol in a Postsecondary Institution Directly from High School

About forty-four percent of this group were attending a postsecondary institution in the fall. The largest single group (16.2%) was enrolled at one of the provincial public college campuses, with another 13.3% in the private college system. Those enrolled at Memorial University of Newfoundland during the fall, including the Fisheries and Marine Institute, accounted for 9.8% of graduates. Only a small percent were pursuing further education out-of-province (4.5%).

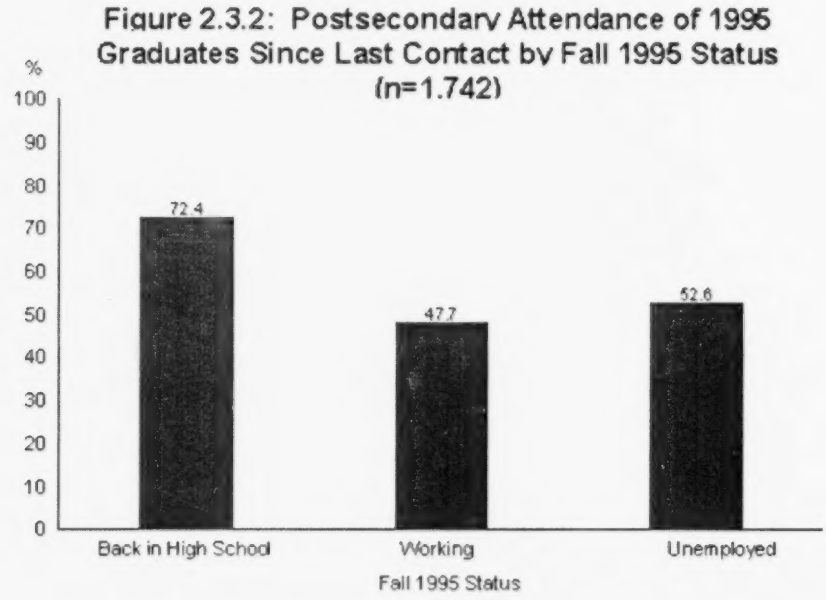
Overall, in the group of 1,742 graduates, there were slightly more males (53%) than females (47%). As of Fall 1996, approximately the same proportion of males and females were attending a postsecondary institution. However, a higher proportion of males than females attended a public college (62.4%). For private colleges, the situation was reversed, with females representing 53.8% of this group. No gender differences were found in those who indicated their status as *working* or *unemployed*.

2.3.1.3 Summer 1997 Enrolment Status of 1995 Graduates Who Did Not Attend Directly from High School

If 1995 graduates in the group were not pursuing a postsecondary education during Fall 1996, they were asked if they had attended a postsecondary institution during any period since graduation in 1995. An additional 161 respondents indicated that they had attended an institution at one time. In total, therefore, 922 (52.9%) of those contacted had attended a postsecondary institution since the original follow-up.

2.3.1.4 Postsecondary Enrolment of 1995 Graduates Not Attending Directly from High School by Fall 1995 Status

The Fall 1995 status of the graduates who did not enrol directly from high school was classified into one of four categories: *back in high school* (n=312), *working* (n=893), *unemployed* (n= 505), or *homemaker* (n=16). Postsecondary enrolment since last contact by each status group is presented in Figure 2.3.2. The upgrading group is of particular interest as the percent planning to attend a postsecondary institution as of last contact was nearly 95%.

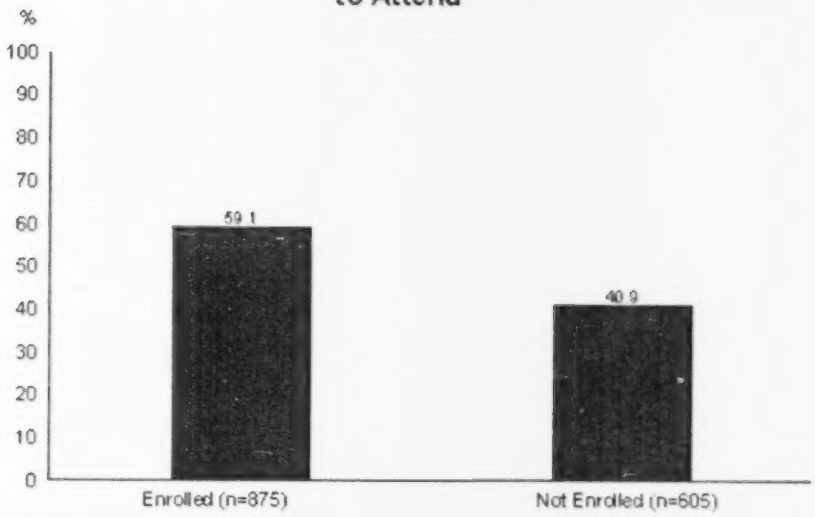


While postsecondary participation rates for the working and unemployed groups were both around the 50% mark, it is worth noting that nearly three out of every four graduates who did some form of high school upgrading were continuing their education

2.3.1.5 Postsecondary Enrolment of 1995 Graduates Not Attending Directly from High School by Fall 1995 Plans

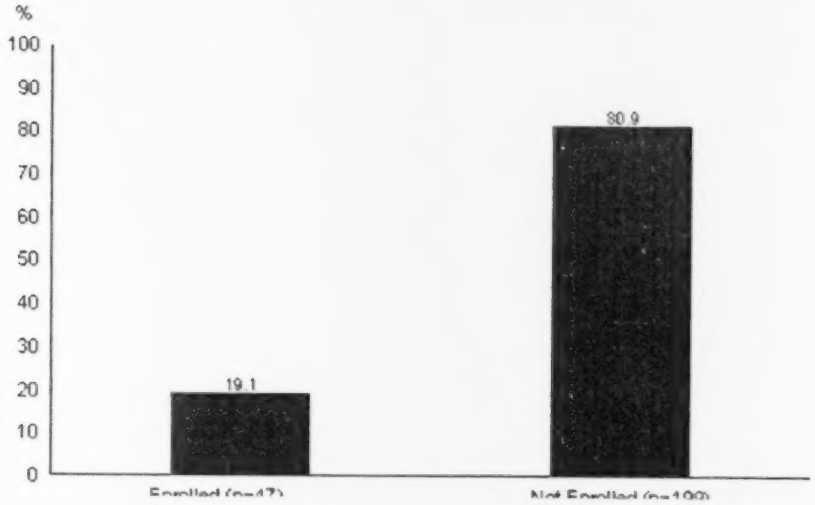
Approximately 85% of those not attending a postsecondary institution in the original follow-up expected to pursue a postsecondary education in the near future. A breakdown of postsecondary attendance for those who delayed entry but planned to attend is shown in Figure 2.3.3. Of the 85% who originally planned to attend (n=1,480), nearly 60% actually enrolled. Figure 2.3.4 concentrates on the smaller group (n=246) who did not plan to attend. Approximately 1 in 5 graduates in this group (19.1%) changed their plans and enrolled.

Figure 2.3.3: Postsecondary Enrolment, as of Summer 1997, of 1995 Graduates Who Delayed Entry But Planned to Attend



Note: Total delaying entry but planning to attend = 1,480.

Figure 2.3.4: Postsecondary Enrolment, as of Summer 1997, of 1995 Graduates Who Did Not Plan to Attend



2.3.2 Choice of Institution

2.3.2.1 1995 Graduates Who Did Not Attend Directly from High School

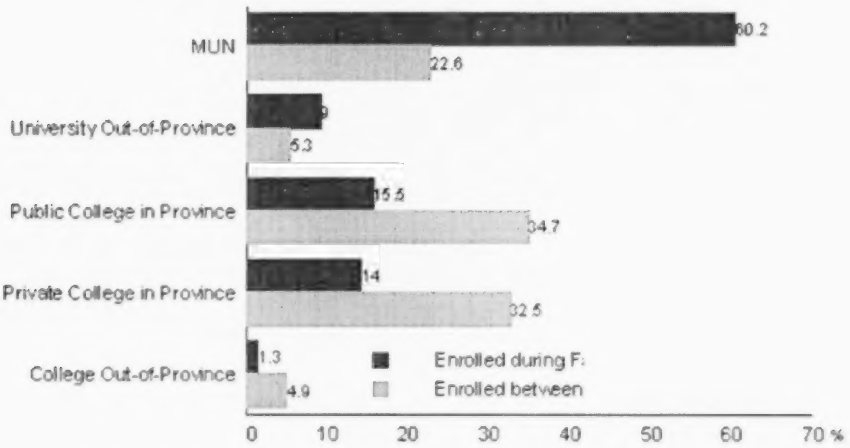
For the group of 1995 graduates that attended a postsecondary institution since the original contact, Table 2.3.3 presents a breakdown of postsecondary destinations by institutional type. Of the 922 attendees, the vast majority attended either a public (34.7%) or private college (32.5%) within the Province. Memorial University, including the Fisheries and Marine Institute, accounted for less than one in four postsecondary students of this cohort (22.6%), while the remainder attended a university or college out-of-province.

Table 2.3.3: Institution of Choice for 1995 Graduates Who Enrolled Between January 1996 and August 1997 (n=922)

2.3.2.2 Comparison of Late Enrollees with Direct Enrollees

Figure 2.3.5 provides a comparison of the type of institution attended for the group of late enrollees with the group that attended in Fall 1995 directly from high school. Late enrollees represented approximately 15.4% of those members of the 1995 graduating class who could be contacted.

Figure 2.3.5: Institution of Choice for 1995 Graduates Enrolling Directly from High School vs. Graduates Who Enrolled Between January 1996 and August 1997



Notes: Total enrolment Fall 1995 = 3,885, total enrolment January 1996 to August 1977 = 922.

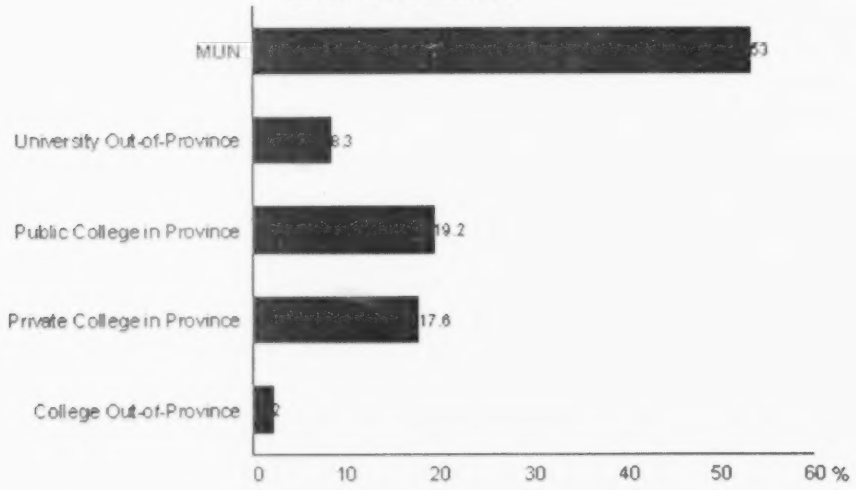
The most significant difference that was found was between the two groups that attended Memorial University. Proportionately, fewer graduates (22.6%) from the group that delayed entering a postsecondary institution than from the group that began a postsecondary program directly from high school, enrolled at Memorial. The reverse is true for college enrolment. Both private and public college enrolment at 32.5% and 34.7%, respectively, was substantially higher for the recent attendees.

Reasons for these differences are speculative. Results from the 1995 analysis revealed that those who attended directly from high school had significantly higher high school averages than those who delayed entry. To some extent entrance standards at Memorial University may restrict accessibility for this latter group. In addition, the pursuit of a college program may be perceived as an easier route. Higher enrolment in the public colleges may also be related to the fact that some students may have been on a waiting list for their program of choice and enrolled when a space became available. Approximately 9% of the 1995 graduates who did not attend a postsecondary institution directly from high school cited *waiting lists* as the reason (Figure 1.3.3). Results of the survey of 1996 graduates showed that 77% of those who delayed entry because of *waiting lists* planned to attend the College of the North Atlantic.

2.3.2.3 1995 Graduates Attending a Postsecondary Institution at Any Time Since Graduation

Figure 2.3.6 presents data for 4,807 graduates of 1995 who had continued their education at the postsecondary level as of August 1997. While enrolment at Memorial is lower for students who delay enrolment, overall, most students

Figure 2.3.6: Institution of Choice for 1995 Graduates Attending a Postsecondary Institution at Any Time Since Graduation



Note: Total enrollees = 4,807.

choose to attend this institution (53.0%). Slightly more 1995 graduates enrolled in the provincial public college system (19.2%) than the private system (17.6%). University and college systems out-of-province accounted for approximately 10% of all postsecondary enrollees of the 1995 graduates.

2.3.3 Questionnaire Results

A separate section of the survey was administered to the 1995 graduates who delayed attending until after Fall 1995. Because graduates were entering postsecondary institutions after being out of school for a period of time, a number of issues were examined. Funding for education, barriers and difficulties that may have resulted from the postponed start, choice of institution, expectations for academic achievement, and whether the graduates were still pursuing their education were all of interest.

Of those attending a postsecondary institution (n=922), approximately 5% (n= 47) had indicated in the previous follow-up that they did not plan to attend a postsecondary institution in the future. Students in this subgroup were asked why they had changed their plans and enrolled since last contact. With such a small group, responses were varied, and non-response was fairly high. However, where responses were given (n=36), lack of job opportunities was mentioned by about one-quarter of these graduates (23.4%, n=11).

2.3.3.1 Full-Time and Part-Time Attendance

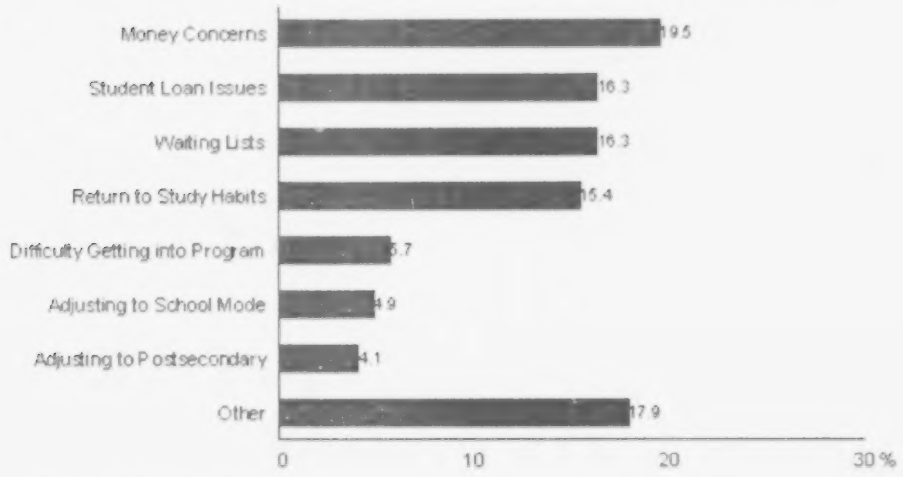
The vast majority of those beginning a postsecondary education did so on a full-time basis (93.5%). There were only small differences among institutions, however, those attending an out-of-province institution were less likely to begin full-time (85.1%). The lower full-time attendance for out-of-province institutions may be an indication that students enrolled in out-of-province correspondence schools.

2.3.3.2 Barriers/Difficulties in Starting Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary attendees were asked if they encountered any barriers or difficulties as a result of delaying the start of their education. Most respondents indicated that they had faced no such barriers, but 121 (13.7%) reported they had encountered difficulties. Figure 2.3.7 presents the barriers or difficulties reported by respondents.

Graduates stated a number of broad non-specific issues relating to money concerns, as well as specific difficulties related to student loans. Together, these two reasons accounted for over one-third of responses (35.0%). Several other specific concerns dealt with the transition back to education (24.4%). *Waiting lists* and *difficulty getting into a program* both related to access to postsecondary study and accounted for 21.9% of graduate concerns.

Figure 2.3.7: Difficulties/Concerns About Attending a Postecondary Institution After Being Out of School



Note: Total having concerns = 121

2.3.3.3 Funding for Education

Respondents were probed about the source of funding for their postsecondary education. Overall, the majority of responses fell into three categories: *student loan* (58.1%), *family sources* (18.4%), and *employment/job income* (18.1%). These results were analyzed by the institution type and presented in Table 2.3.4. Column percent totals may exceed 100% because graduates provided multiple responses.

A higher percentage of those attending private colleges indicated that their primary source of funding was a *student loan*, and a lower percentage of this group reported *family sources* or *job income*. Attendees of the public colleges and out-of-province institutions had somewhat similar profiles, but opposite to the private colleges. The majority of respondents attending Memorial University reported having financial support from a *student loan*, *family sources*, or *employment/job income*.

Table 2.3.4: Source of Funding by Institution Attended (n=922)

2.3.3.4 First Choice of Program

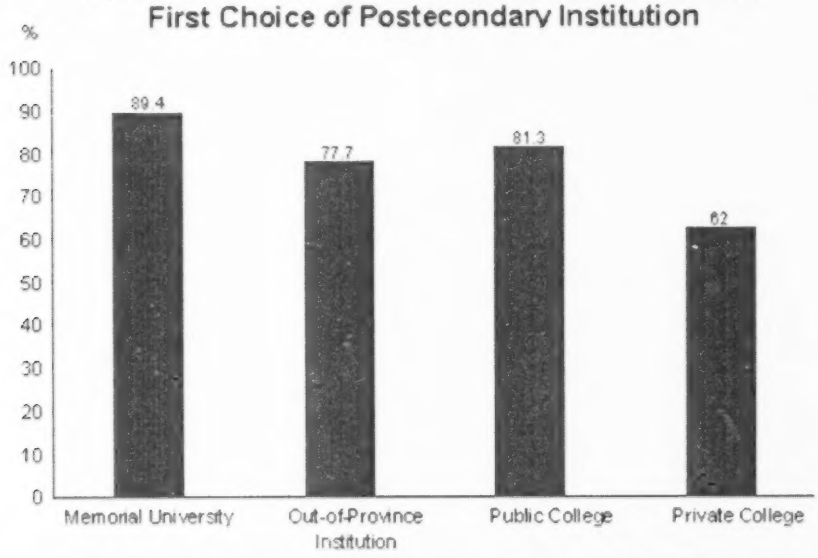
Overall, about three out of four graduates (76.5%) attended the postsecondary institution of their first choice. Figure 2.3.8 presents these results for the four major institutional types. For those attending Memorial University, 89.5% indicated it was their first choice, followed by 81.3% of those attending the public college. Of those attending a private college, only 62% indicated that it was their first choice.

Of the 23.5% (n=211) of respondents who indicated that they did not attend their institution of first choice, where they had wanted to attend and reasons for not attending were reported. For those whose first choice was university, almost half (46.3%) ultimately attended a private college, with another 32.8% attending a public college. Of graduates who selected public college as their first choice, 72.2% enrolled in a private institution.

Overall, the two major reasons presented for not attending the institution of first choice were *marks required for entrance* (28.0%) and respondents on *waiting lists* (20.9%). Other reasons mentioned less often included *financial* (9.5%) and *career change* (7.1%).

For those whose first choice was Memorial University (n=67), 59.7% reported *low marks* as the reason for not attending. About 47% of those who initially wanted to attend a public college (n=79) indicated *waiting lists* as the major reason for not attending while 17.7% cited *low marks* as the reason. Respondents wishing to attend a private college in this province or elsewhere cited a variety of reasons for not attending.

Figure 2.3.8: Percent of Late Enrollees Attending First Choice of Postecondary Institution



Note: 1995 graduates attending between January 1996 and August 1997, total enrollees = 922.

2.3.3.5 Expected Level of Education

The graduates who had attended a postsecondary institution were asked what level of education they wanted to achieve. Over one-third (36.3%) indicated that they wanted to obtain a degree at university, with 8.7% aiming for a post-graduate degree. Thirty percent expected to earn a public college diploma/certificate, with 11.6% indicating that they were hoping for a private college diploma/certificate. One in five respondents (21.4%) did not know or were unsure of what level of education they expected to achieve. About one-quarter of those attending either a private or public college in the Province wanted to obtain a university degree. This suggests that in some cases colleges are being used as a "stepping stone" to university. Regardless of the level of education that the graduates wanted to achieve, 95.7% indicated that they expected to achieve their desired goal.

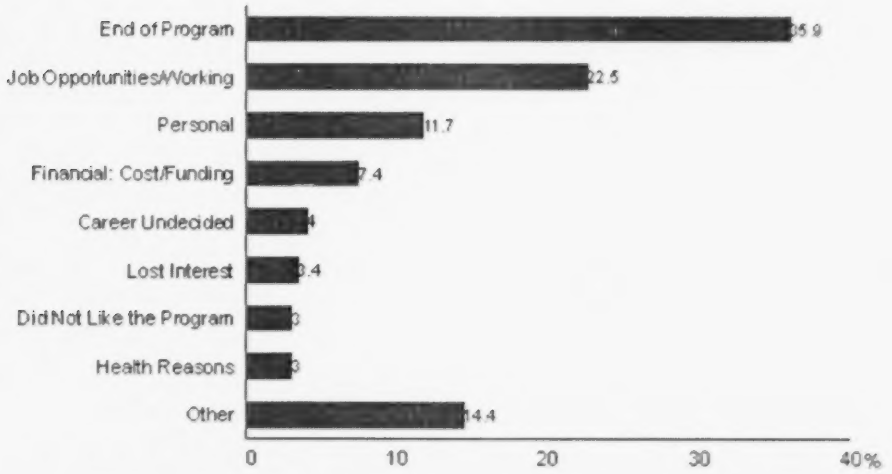
2.3.3.6 Program Status

Finally, postsecondary attendees were asked about whether they were still enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Results indicate that nearly one-third (32.3%, n=298) of these graduates who had begun a postsecondary program since original contact were no longer in their postsecondary program as of the current survey contact. Figure 2.3.9 presents the reasons given to explain why the graduates were no longer pursuing a postsecondary education at the institution in which they originally enrolled.

End of program was reported most often, indicating that over one-third of the 298 graduates in this group completed their postsecondary program. This indicates, however, that 64.1% left the postsecondary institution before the completion of the program. *Job opportunities/ working* was given as the main reason, followed by *personal* (11.7%) and *financial reasons* (7.4%).

Respondents in this group were also asked whether they had plans to enrol in a postsecondary institution within the next twelve months. Over half (52.7%) reported that they had such plans, with a further 15.1% indicating they were unsure whether they will attend. Of those planning to attend, 33.8% indicated they plan to attend a public college, 26.1% plan to attend Memorial University, 16% plan to attend a private institution, and 14.6% indicated a preference for an out-of-province institution. Roughly one in ten were unsure of where they would be attending.

Figure 2.3.9: Reasons Why Late Enrollees Were No Longer Enrolled in a Postsecondary Institution



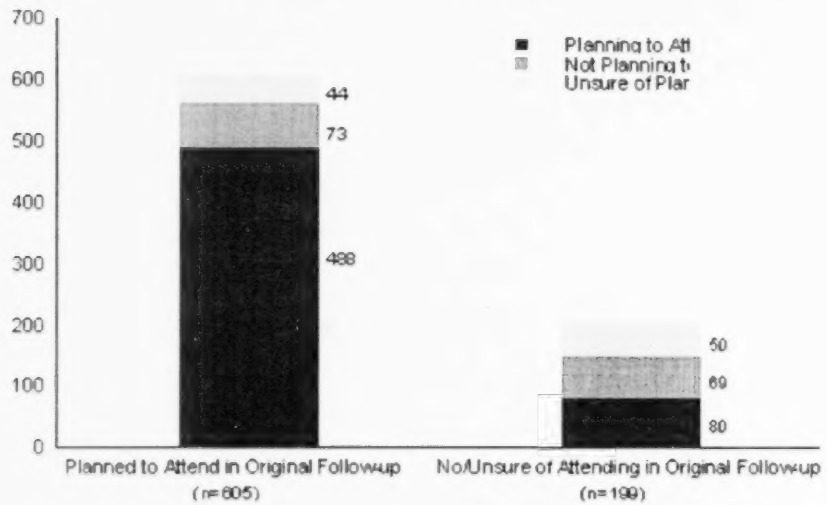
Note: Refers to 1995 graduates attending between January 1996 and August 1997. Total late enrollees no longer enrolled = 298.

2.3.3.7 1995 Graduates Who Have Never Attended a Postsecondary Institution

With the significant emphasis placed on the importance of a postsecondary education in today's economy, it is important to understand why high school graduates choose not to pursue a postsecondary education. During the 1997 follow-up, the 804 graduates with no postsecondary education since graduation in 1995 were asked whether they were planning to further their education in the future. Overall, 70.6% (n=568) indicated that they planned to attend in the future, while 11.7% were unsure. Those who do not expect to further their education at the postsecondary level accounted for the remaining 17.7%.

Figure 2.3.10 shows reported future postsecondary plans of those 1995 graduates who had not attended a postsecondary institution since graduation. Each group is arranged to reflect original plans, as of Fall 1995. As can be seen from the chart, approximately 80.7% of those who had plans to attend as of 1995 still intend to enrol. Similarly 40.2% of the group who had no plans to further their education in 1995 changed their mind.

Figure 2.3.10: Postecondary Plans of 1995 Graduates Who Have Not Attended a Postecondary Institution, by Original Plans to Attend



Note: 1995 graduates who have never attended a postsecondary institution = 804.

2.3.3.8 1995 Graduates Not Attending a Postsecondary Institution as Originally Planned as of Last Contact

As indicated in Figure 2.3.3 over 40% (n=605) of those planning to attend a postsecondary institution did not follow through with their plans. This group was queried as to why they changed their plans.

The *financial cost* was a significant barrier to enrolling in a postsecondary institution, with 41.0% of graduates indicating that it affected their decision not to begin a program. *Job prospects/working* also played a large role, with 35.9% reporting this reason for the change in educational plans. For this group, 80.7% indicated that they will attend a postsecondary institution in the future, with 7.3% unsure and 12.1% reporting no plans to attend.

2.3.3.9 1995 Graduates Planning to Attend as of Last Contact

Of the 568 respondents indicating their intentions for furthering their education, the largest number plan to enrol in a public college (30.8%), with those aiming for a provincial private school accounting for 18.8%, and 9.2% aspiring to attend university. About 30% were unsure of where they would attend.

The date of planned attendance varied for this group. Most planned to begin their postsecondary program in Fall 1997 (41.6%, n=236), with a further 26.2% (n=149) planning to begin in 1998. Over one-quarter of respondents (27.5%) were unsure of when they would begin, and with no specific date in mind, it is likely that a lower percent will actually attend than those who have a specific time planned. Analysis shows that for all respondents indicating that they would be attending as of last contact, if an exact date was given 65.1% actually attended, whereas if no date was given only 33.2% attended.

On expectations of funding, most responses fell into two main categories: *student loan* (59.9%), and *employment/job income* (32.6%), with those *unsure* at just 6.7%. In comparison to those respondents who had attended a postsecondary institution, *student loan* share response was similar, while the percent indicating *employment/job income* was half as much for those already attending. This difference may be explained by high school graduates who had been working for a longer period in order to fund their education.

2.3.3.10 Those Not Planning to Attend

Over one-third (n=236) of 1995 graduates not having attended a postsecondary institution were unsure or had no plans to attend in the future. Reasons offered by respondents varied, with the predominant reason being *job prospects/ was working* (37.3%) followed closely by *financial cost* (28.4%). By gender, there are key differences in reasons reported for not attending as planned. Females tended to report *financial reasons* (35.6%), more than males (21.2%). Males, on the other hand, report *working* as a reason 44.9% of the time compared to 29.7% for females.

2.3.3.11 Financial Barriers

Respondents who had not attended and who had no plans to attend were asked directly whether the cost of attending affected the decision not to pursue a postsecondary education. Overall, just over half (51.3%, n=121) reported that cost was indeed a factor in their decision. Statistical differences were found in this result by gender, as 58.5% of females indicated *yes* as compared to 44.1% for males. This result is consistent with reasons presented for not attending, where *job/work* was the major response for males, and financial for females.

While cost can affect the decision to attend, it may not keep someone from pursuing further education. Therefore, respondents indicating finances as affecting the decision to attend (n=128) were queried whether the availability of financial assistance would change their decision to attend a postsecondary institution. In total, 62.5% (n=80) indicated that it would be enough to do so, with 25.8% (n=33) unsure.

For the 113 respondents who said the availability of finances would (or may) cause them to pursue a postsecondary education, the question of financial assistance was taken one step further. This group was asked whether they would be willing to incur any debt to pursue a postsecondary education. Just under half (47.8%) indicated that they would incur such debt, with another 23.0% *unsure*. For the type of financial assistance that would be required, most reported student loan (47.3%), with *employment/job income* next at 12.5%. About thirty percent (30.4%) were unsure of the type of funding they would require.

In summary, of the 236 high school graduates who had no plans to attend a postsecondary institution, 105 (44.5%) indicated that *funding* was not an issue in attending, and therefore would not have been affected by a change in the availability of financial support. However, a substantial number of 1995 high school graduates (33.9%, n=80) who have no plans to enrol would do so if financial assistance were made available. This is a significant finding given the positive correlation between education attainment level and employment.

Discussion

Postsecondary Participation Levels

Overall, results for both the 1996 and the second 1995 high school graduate follow-up studies are very encouraging. High proportions of graduates from both cohorts had enrolled in a postsecondary institution, and many of those not attending indicated that they had future plans to do so. The data show that two years following graduation approximately 80% of 1995 graduates had entered a postsecondary institution. Findings from the one year-follow-up of 1996 graduates suggest even higher levels of postsecondary participation are likely to be eventually observed for this group.

For the 1996 cohort, approximately three of every four graduates (73.4%) had enrolled in a postsecondary program in the Fall following graduation from high school, an increase of 5.2 percentage points over 1995. Among those who did not attend, a further 73.9% indicated they had plans to do so at some time in the future. The extent to which graduates who delay entering a postsecondary program actually do enrol can be estimated from the experience of 1995 graduates who were surveyed a second time approximately two years after completing high school. Nearly 60% of those previously indicating that they would attend actually enrolled, and more than 80% of those who did not enrol still held plans to do so.

The results also indicate that many graduates with no plans to pursue higher education at a college or university change their plans and enrol within two years of leaving high school. Among the 1995 graduates who had previously indicated having no plans to attend (n=246), less than half held to this position. The second follow-up showed that about 20% did enrol in a postsecondary institution, and another 33% reported plans to attend in the future. These data suggest a reasonable expectation that a significant proportion of 1996 graduates who indicated they had no plans to attend will reconsider their decision.

However, there seems little doubt that the longer high school graduates are out of school, the more difficult it may become to enter a postsecondary institution. Finding work may, in itself, be a significant deterrent. Results of those who had planned to attend a postsecondary institution and did not follow through on these plans show that having work or job prospects was one of the more frequently cited reasons offered for not attending.

The findings from this research support the notion that the vast majority of university bound graduates enrol directly from high school. Graduates who delay entry to postsecondary are more likely to enrol in a public or private college. In fact, more than 70% of this group from the 1995 cohort enrolled in a college program. It may be that university bound graduates have decided on an educational path and pursue that plan without delay. Future follow-up studies need to examine the factors influencing a student/Es choice of institution, which may include tuition cost, academic achievement, location of institution, program/institution reputation, space availability in the program of choice, and institutions' marketing strategies.

The high postsecondary participation rates observed for high school graduates of 1995 and 1996 are likely a result of a combination of factors that are interacting to attract students to postsecondary study. Firstly, over the past two decades, a major goal of educational jurisdictions has been to improve the ability of school systems to retain students through to high school graduation. This emphasis has been reflected in the growth of special education services, a focus on the dropout problem, various "stay in school" programs and other initiatives aimed at improving retention. Secondly, it is believed that during times of slow economic activity educational participation levels increase. Fewer opportunities for employment exist

generally, and this would be particularly true for dropouts from the school system or for graduates with only a high school diploma. A third related factor is that the growth in technology has resulted in a decrease in the number of low-skill jobs. Students finishing their formal education without some form of postsecondary education or training are less likely to find employment than ever before.

Barriers to Higher Education

Lack of adequate financial resources remains a significant barrier to postsecondary education and is one of the main reasons reported by high school graduates for not attending. Well over half the 1995 graduates who had already attended or were planning to attend reported student loans as their source of funding.

Most 1996 graduates who were not planning to attend a college or university indicated that availability of financing would alter their plans. The second follow-up of 1995 graduates also found a significant portion of those not attending would do so if funding were available. While the federal and provincial student loans programs offer a financial means to a postsecondary education, the data suggest that some graduates are either unwilling to incur debt to further their education or that sufficient funds are not available to students through these programs.

Consistent with earlier findings, parent education level was related to the decision to attend a postsecondary institution. Most of those with no future postsecondary plans were children of parents who themselves had not completed any postsecondary education.

Policy Implications

The issue of funding for a postsecondary education is validated by this study as a barrier to enrolment. Educational funding issues need to be closely monitored as government and institutional policymakers strive to increase postsecondary participation. Whether a student has postponed further education, or holds no plans to attend in the future, the financial aspect in the decision-making process is significant. Proposed harmonization of the federal and provincial student loans programs is supported by this province as a means of improving financial aid to students. The Millennium Scholarships and the interim bridging measures taken by the province are also positive steps. However, the cost of postsecondary programs in all sectors, but particularly the university and the private colleges, combined with insufficient student employment opportunities, have resulted in substantial debt loads for many postsecondary graduates. A poor employment history for graduates of certain programs has also meant student loan default ratios in the 20% to 40% range for graduates of different institution types.

Another emerging policy issue is the need to supply students with a range of information on postsecondary options, including program cost and labour market information. The school, through its guidance and career education programs, must be the key source of unbiased career planning information for the student. Extensive, reliable, and current information needs to be made available to high school students so they can make well-informed decisions on their educational pursuits after graduation. This type of information must further be linked to labour market success indicators such as employment levels and initial earnings for graduates, by program and institution. This is particularly important for students whose parents have no postsecondary experience, where the schools' influence is critical.

The Department of Education's report entitled *Postsecondary Indicators '98* detailed how a significant number of postsecondary graduates from mainly one and two-year programs were either unemployed or had low initial earnings. The Department of Education also publishes results from its postsecondary graduate follow-up surveys in the form of program profiles listing graduate satisfaction levels, initial earnings and employment levels of recent graduates. It is essential that schools redouble their efforts in educating

students about the availability and use of these data in postsecondary planning.

Future Directions

The methodology used for the 1996 graduate follow-up yielded valuable information on the educational pursuits of graduates, and reasons why some postpone or forgo a postsecondary education. However, the absence of information on the 11.9% who were unreachable represents a significant gap. This is especially true in light of the fact that the majority of graduates in this group likely fall into one of the non-educational categories: working, unemployed, or homemaker. Having up-to-date student information and the full cooperation of the schools in releasing home phone numbers would improve the integrity of the information on graduates.

For future follow-ups, the data collection process needs to begin earlier with the collection of a small amount of information from Level III students before they graduate, including up-to-date contact information, and tentative post-graduation plans. An alternative to the current census-type methodology would be to survey a random sample of sufficient size to ensure an acceptable level of error on the results, while not experiencing an unacceptable level of lost information.

High school graduate follow-up surveys are an important part of the overall monitoring role of the Department of Education. They provide key information on educational progress and barriers to continuing education after high school. However, there is some question as to whether it is necessary to undertake a follow-up of this magnitude for every graduating year. One alternative would be to survey the graduating class every two or three years to ensure consistent information is available on the decisions graduates are making with respect to their future, and specifically, their post-high school educational pursuits.

Figures and Tables

FIGURES

1.3.1 Fall Status of June Graduates, 1995 and 1996

1.3.2 Postsecondary Enrolment Share of High School Graduates in the Fall After Graduation by Institution, 1995 and 1996

1.3.3 Reasons for Not Attending a Postsecondary Institution in the Fall After June Graduation, 1995 and 1996

1.3.4 Plans of Graduates Who Did Not Enrol Directly from High School to Pursue a Postsecondary Education, 1995 and 1996.

1.3.5 Preferred Institution Type of 1996 Graduates Who Did Not Enrol Directly from High School But Who Plan to Attend

1.3.6 Expected Source of Funding of 1996 Graduates Who Did Not Enrol Directly from High School But Who Plan to Attend

2.3.1 Postsecondary Participation for 1995 Graduates

2.3.2 Postsecondary Attendance of 1995 Graduates Since Last Contact by Fall 1995 Status

2.3.3 Postsecondary Enrolment, as of Summer 1997, of 1995 Graduates Who Delayed Entry But Planned to Attend

2.3.4 Postsecondary Enrolment, as of Summer 1997, of 1995 Graduates Who Did Not Plan to Attend

2.3.5 Institution of Choice for 1995 Graduates Enrolling Directly from High School vs. Graduates Who Enrolled Between January 1996 and August 1997

2.3.6 Institution of Choice for 1995 Graduates Attending a Postsecondary Institution at Any Time Since Graduation

2.3.7 Difficulties/Concerns About Attending a Postsecondary Institution After Being Out of School

2.3.8 Percent of Late Enrollees Attending First Choice of Postsecondary Institution

2.3.9 Reasons Why Late Enrollees Were No Longer Enrolled in a Postsecondary Institution

2.3.10 Postsecondary Plans of 1995 Graduates Who Have Not Attended a Postsecondary Institution, by Original Plans to Attend

TABLES

1.2.1 Unsuccessful Call Results, 1996 High School Graduates

1.3.1 Status of the 1996 High School Graduates, Fall 1996

1.3.2 Anticipated Student Loan Amount Required, 1996 Graduates Who Did Not Enrol But Who Plan to Attend

1.3.3 Reasons Cited by June 1996 High School Graduates for Not Attending a Postsecondary Institution in Fall 1996

2.2.1 Unsuccessful Call Results

2.3.1 Fall 1996 Status of 1995 High School Graduates Who Did Not Enrol in a Postsecondary Institution Directly from High School

2.3.2 Postsecondary Attendance of 1995 Graduates Since Last Contact by Fall 1995 Status and Institution Type

2.3.3 Institution of Choice for 1995 Graduates Who Enrolled Between January 1996 and August 1997

2.3.4 Source of Funding by Institution Attended

Table 1.2.1
Unsuccessful Call Results, 1996 High School Graduates

Call Results	n	%
Not in Service	244	28.4
Moved - No Forwarding Number	203	23.6
Moved - Refused to Provide Forwarding Number	172	20.1
Wrong Number	43	5
Unreachable	111	12.9
No Number Available	44	5.1
Other	42	4.9
Total	859	100

Table 1.3.1
Status of the 1996 High School Graduates, Fall 1996

Status	%
Memorial University of Newfoundland	36.7
University Out-of-Province	7.3
Public College in Province	11.7
Public College Out-of-Province	0.9
Private College in Province	12.7
Private College Out-of-Province	0.6
High School	4.0
Working	17.8
Homemaker	1.7
Unemployed	6.3
Refused	0.3

Notes:
Total June Graduates = 7,251.
Total Accounted for in Study = 6,392.
Total Pursuing Education (including High School) = 73.9%.
Total Pursuing Postsecondary Education = 69.9%.

Table 1.3.2
Anticipated Student Loan Amount Required, 1996 Graduates Who Did Not Enrol But Who Plan to Attend

Loan Amount Per Year	n	%
Less than $2,000	16	2.0
$2,000 - $3,999	46	5.7
$4,000 - $5,999	60	7.4
$6,000 - $7,999	54	6.7
$8,000 - 49,999	52	6.4
$10,000 and over	104	12.8
Unsure	478	59.0
Total	810	100

Table 1.3.3
Reasons Cited by June 1996 High School Graduates for Not Attending a Postsecondary Institution in Fall 1996

Reason	Delayed Attending Until 1997		Planning to Attend		Not Planning to Attend		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Career Undecided	54	23.9	242	19.5	77	17.6	373	19.6
Job Prospects/ Working	47	20.8	293	23.6	137	31.4	477	25.1
Upgrading	44	19.5	193	15.6	18	4.1	255	13.4
Financial: Cost/Funding	32	14.2	215	17.3	108	24.7	355	18.7
Personal	25	11.1	129	10.4	29	6.6	183	9.6
Not Interested	23	10.2	160	12.9	89	20.4	272	14.3
Waitlisted	14	6.2	128	10.3	5	1.1	147	7.7
Other	21	9.3	48	3.9	41	9.4	110	5.8
Total Group Respondents	226		1,240		437		1,903	

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because multiple responses are reported.

Table 2.2.1
Unsuccessful Call Results

Call Results	n	%
Not in Service	110	31.1
Moved - No Forwarding Number	106	29.9
Moved - Refused to Give Forwarding Number	18	5.1
Wrong Number	42	11.9
Unreachable	61	17.2
Other	17	4.8
Total	354	100

Table 2.3.1
Fall 1996 Status of 1995 High School Graduates Who Did Not Enrol in a Postsecondary Institution Directly from High School

Status	%
Memorial University of Newfoundland	9.8
University Out-of-Province	2.8
Public College in Province	16.2
Public College Out-of-Province	1.0
Private College in Province	13.3
Private College Out-of-Province	0.7
High School	1.0
Working	40.9
Homemaker	1.7
Unemployed	11.8
Refused	0.9

Notes:
Graduates accounted for: 1,742 of 2,111.
Total 1995 graduates who did not enrol directly from high school who were pursuing postsecondary education as of Fall 1996: 43.7%.

Table 2.3.2
Postsecondary Attendance of 1995 Graduates Since Last Contact by Fall 1995 Status and Institution Type (n=917)

Institution Type	Fall 1995 Status: Back in High School		Working		Unemployed	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Memorial University of Newfoundland	88	38.9	88	20.7	32	12.1
Public College	76	33.6	139	32.6	104	39.2
Private College	44	19.5	144	33.8	108	40.8
Out-of-Province Institutions	18	8.0	55	12.9	21	7.9
Total	226	100	426	100	265	100

Table 2.3.3
Institution of Choice for 1995 Graduates Who Enrolled Between January 1996 and August 1997 (n=922)

Status	%
Memorial University of Newfoundland	22.6
University Out-of-Province	5.3
Public College in Province	34.7
Private College in Province	32.5
College Out-of-Province	4.9

Table 2.3.4
Source of Funding by Institution Attended (*n*=922)

Source of Funding	Memorial University		Public College		Private College		Out-of- province institution		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Student Loan	112	53.8	148	46.3	234	78.0	42	44.7	536	58.1
Family Sources	50	24.0	67	20.9	28	9.3	25	26.6	170	18.4
Employment/ Job Income	52	25.0	72	22.5	22	7.3	21	22.3	167	18.1
HRDC	0	0	31	9.7	22	7.3	2	2.1	55	6.0
Unemployment Insurance	4	1.9	17		7	2.3	4	4.3	32	3.5
Scholarship	4	1.9	1	0.3	1	0.3	2	2.1	8	0.9
Other	7	3.4	12	3.8	9	3.0	7	7.4	34	3.7

References

Centre for Educational Research and Development, Memorial University of Newfoundland. (1991). *Youth Transition into the Labour Market. The Class of '89: Initial Survey of Level III (Grade 12) High School Students.*

Centre for Educational Research and Development, Memorial University of Newfoundland. (1990). *Youth Transition into the Labour Market. The Early School Leavers: Initial Survey.*

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. (1998). *Estimates 1998-99.*

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Department of Education. (1998). *Postsecondary Indicators '98* .

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Department of Education. (1997). *Profile '96: Educational Indicators.*